Gandalf Escapes Upon Gwaihir – by Ted Nasmith

Greetings,

Salutations.... Hello All!

First off, I'd like to thank Feanorgil for coming back to the fold. Without his appearance and questioning a number of things, I would never have gotten this resurgance of enthusiasm for the game. With that and my finishing *The Children of Hurin*, new ideas for games and subsequently content for the webzine has fermented. It's kinda funny how something like that can happen.

This issue will see some of the new ideas I have, such as a new section called Random Encounters. In contrast to Hostile Haunts that is more or less about unfriendlies and their lairs, Random Encounters is about simple scenarios that Narrators can use as quick one-shots for demonstrations or as an interlude and they won't be limited to combat scenarios. This month's is about a wolf pack raiding a local village. This month will also see a new adventure by Tomcat called The Minstrel's Lament, a new creature for the bestiary, plus a whole lot more!

Happy Gaming to you,

Matthew Kearns
aka GandalfOfBorg
Editor

The Hall of Fire

The Unofficial Lord of the Rings RPG Webzine

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A Narrator's So-Called Life: The Players

by Matthew "GandalfOfBorg" Kearns

Now that in the last issue we worked on getting a game outlined and begun to be fleshed out with allies, villains, locations, and plot, the only thing missing to the list of ingredients are the players. Let's find some, get them interested, and deal with some of the common ailments they cause to a game.

Getting Gamers to the Table

Without the players, this game won't be much fun, so you need to find some and there are two ways to do this.

Part of a Group

You are a part of a currently populated gaming group. That's great, you're a step ahead of everyone else. The only issue with this I see is that one or more of the players may cringe, whine, or otherwise not be interested in gaming in Tolkien's world. That's just something to be worked out with you and your group.

New Group

If you don't already have a group, advertise! Do it at a local community center, game store, online, whatever you want. The pro about this means is that you know your group wants to play Lord of the Rings, the major con though is that it can take some time to find a group, let alone a group of people who are compatible (how to deal with this would be an entirely new article on its own).

Creating Interest and Keeping It

You've got the guys and/or gals around the table, but now what? Now you've got to pitch to them the game you'd like to play or maybe the game, topics, lands, or what other limitations you are going to put on the chronicle. This is the point where the previous article comes in handy when you want to discus the focus and parameters of the game. Getting the players to agree to these things in the beginning is important as it will set the atmosphere in which you will run your game and the players interact within it.

Keeping the interest up in the game harkens back to this point in the process of playing the game as well. Intertwine different people's ideas into the story, make a character a focus for one chapter, or take special notice (and reward) excellent roleplaying or great ideas. These are ways a Narrator can show appreciation to a player besides the 5 picks upon gaining an Advancement. If things do go awry in the game, don't be afraid to stop for awhile, get the players' input on what's wrong and/or how to change things. The big thing to remember is that you aren't in this game alone -- in worlds as rich and complex as Middle-earth, much of the enjoyment of the game comes from simply collaborating with the other people around the table to create an experience as close to what you and they had reading the Professor's stories.

Creating Characters

The Lord of the Rings RPG character creation rules are very open-ended and unpredictable, meaning without some direction from the Narrator given when setting the parameters of the game and during actual character creation, players can create characters that be very overwhelming to a game. This is especially true with combat options. In the early issues of The Hall of Fire, I described, in three parts, the process in which to create a character. Though I left it to the third part, I think coming up with a character's concept, background, and personality should be done first as a framework for selecting skills, traits, and abilities.

There have been complaints ranging from a disagreement on the disparate power of certain edges to complete disgust with the lack of "balance" of traits and abilities. The arguments can be valid, but are best decided upon by the Narrator and his group. The Hall of Fire has presented many options, discussions, and rules revisions for traits and abilities, so there is no shortage of information to review if you think that there might be a problem in some area.

In this game, there may be Orders representing some archetypes in the world of Middle-earth, but there is no need for the concept of niche protection in my opinion. You don't "need" nor are most scenarios based around the concept of a core set of characters: a healer, a magic flamethrower, a sneak-thief, and a giant-sword wielding warrior. More likely, you'll decide to have a group composed of just Hobbits galavanting about The Shire or troop of Dunadan Rangers of the North setting out of Rivendell on a mission against the shadows from Angmar or even a completely motley band of adventurers with Men, Dwarves, Elves, and Hobbits, but usually those kinds of groups require some sort of justification in the game to explain why that diverse of a group is together.

Problem Characters / Players

Finally, the last issue concerning players is about when problems arise from the constants: rules-lawyering, canon lawyers, and powergamers. The first is a fairly easy issue to deal with: you're the Narrator, you decide which rules apply and when they apply. The only caveat to this is that you need to do this consistantly to be fair. It's even wise to discuss any deviations from the book rules with the group and get their opinion and approval. As long as you state your justification and they accept it (even if they don't agree), the game should go quite well.

Canon lawyers of Middle-earth are typically of a fairly nasty breed, moreso than many other worlds like Star Wars or Star Trek. In this matter, you need to be up-front with your players in stating what canon is going to remain so and which is going to be stretched, bypassed, or even rewritten. This way you can minimize the canon lawyering and maximize the enjoyment of the story by all.

Last, powergaming can get easily out of hand using the game as written or even if you use house rules to fix issues you have with some game mechanics. Usually this can be avoided by being proactive in the character generation process and overseeing the picks acquired during advancement. Otherwise, you just might be fine with characters who are combat gorillas and just foil their strengths with many social situations or vice versa. Use the solutions that best fit the group you are gaming with and things should go well.

Aldarion on Not Playing the Hero:

"I haven't actually experienced uncharacteristic gameplay for the setting in my own Chronicle, but I know of others who have run into the problem of characters looting every corpse and robbing every grave, as if they were playing a certain other fantasy roleplaying game! Very un-Tolkienesque, if you ask me. My players' characters, when a similar situation arose, burned a very nice sword (actually a Dunedain blade) that was being wielded by an orc along with the carcasses of the orcs they had slain. The theory was that they wanted nothing tainted by Orcs, especially not a blade that had likely tasted the blood of Men and Elves in the hands of an Orc. They buried all the dead Men with all honour they could, along with all their weapons and armour, the latter repaired as best they could and the former clasped in dead hands. Considering they gave up hundreds of silver pieces worth of 'loot', including at least one 'magical' weapon in order to roleplay in the universe, I rewarded them with stacks of experience and had the whole scene witnessed by Gondorian scouts, giving the characters positive Renown bonuses within Gondor. I've rarely been so proud of my players!"

"How to stop it when it happens? Well, there's always the old experience penalty, plus there's the opposite of what I did. What would be the reaction of a Wandering Company of Elves should they witness the characters despoiling the dead (assuming the dead are men or elves)? And what would be the reaction to them wielding weapons obviously once held by Orcs (assuming the dead are orcs)? In an RPG like LOTR, in-game solutions often work better than meta-game solutions (like talking to the players directly). Another possibility is that the weapons or "loot" may be cursed in some way, and that curse will activate on the characters. Go see Pirates of the Caribbean: Curse of the Black Pearl for some nasty ideas along those lines!"

Random Encounters:

Warg / Wolf Pack

by Matthew "GandalfOfBorg" Kearns

The wilds of Middle-earth are dangerous, especially in the forests where dwell the hounds of The Shadow.

Description: This encounter is comprised of wolves, wargs, or a mixed group, the wolves being bullied into service.

Type: Combat

Numbers: (Standard) Fellowship +1 wolves OR Fellowship -2 wargs OR Fellowship wolves and Fellowship/2 wargs

(Advanced) +4 wolves OR +2 wargs OR +2 wolves and +1 warg

TN Equivalent: 5

Locales: These packs roam the lands, terrorizing both traveler and village alike. They rarely venture into more populated areas (Bree-sized and larger), but will only do so if ordered by their masters or when in great force. They are typically found in forested areas, plains near forests, and mountainous areas. They also can be found roaming the lands near strongholds of The Enemy as sentinels.

Encounter Probability

Locate the appropriate terrain type on the table below. Roll 2d6. If the result is within the indicated range, an encounter occurs.

Terrain Type	Encounter on...
Forest	4-9
Plains	5-8
Mountains	5-8
Desert	2, 12
Swamp	5-8
Tundra	2-3, 11-12
Underground	N/A
Sea coast	N/A
At sea	N/A

Stats

See *Fell Beasts and Wondrous Magic*.*

*Note: When using skills and abilities of a monster to represent the group, use the best available from the group.

Unit Stats

See *Isengard*.**

**Note: Wolf and warg mass combat units have the Beast classification (cannot perform maneuvers); if the unit has a pack leader, this limitation is removed.

Special Encounter Abilities and Modifiers

Lair

The pack knows the lay of their territory like none other and use it to their advantage. When encountered at or near a pack's lair, they receive an affinity bonus from Survival to their Defense. If fighting as a mass combat unit with the same location restriction, they gain an affinity bonus to their Toughness from Survival; otherwise, if the pack leader (see below) is present, double the affinity bonus from its Siegecraft skill.

Stalking

When a pack is stalking you and decide to attack, the reckoning can be devastating. The pack receives a +5 bonus to combat skills during the surprise round or a +3 bonus to combat skills during the first round of combat. If fighting as a mass combat unit and have not been detected by their enemy, the unit gains a +1 Strength bonus (+2 if a pack leader is present) on the first round of combat between the units.

Hit and Run

Wargs and wolves are highly dextrous and quick – their tactics are simple and brutal: evade by stealth, attack from cover, and retreat back to cover. The pack receives a +2 bonus to combat skills and -1 degree of success (minimum Marginal). After each attack, successful or not, each member must make a Stealth test again to hide, otherwise the warg or wolf cannot perform this tactic the next round. An unsuccessful Stealth test requires the pack member to wait until the next round to attempt the Stealth test again and then wait another round following it to attack once again. If the pack is fighting as a mass combat unit, when attacking an adjacent enemy unit and the pack leader performs a TN 10 Siegecraft (Pack Leader) test, the pack unit may attack as normal, dissolve, and reform on any side of the enemy unit available, excluding the original location. The bonus from Stalking doesn't apply when using this ability.

New Package

Name: Pack Leader

Order*: Captain

Skills*: Armed Combat: Natural Weapons (Claws, Fangs) +2, Insight +4, Intimidate (Fear) +3, Language: Warg-speak +3, Lore/Race: Elves +3, Lore/Race: Men +3, Observe (Sense Power) +2, Siegecraft (Pack Leader) +4

Edges*: Command, Fell-handed, Rank, Strong-willed

Flaws*: Enemy (Free Peoples)

Abilities*: Air of Command, Leadership (Intimidate instead of Inspire)

Spells*: Evoke Fear, Mist of Speed, Sense Power (ability)

TN Mod: +5

*Note: All character traits in a package are in addition to what's listed for the base monster in FB&WM.

Definitions

Fellowship: Number of characters, PC and NPC, in group

Standard: This is the base number of foes suitable for a beginning level group (0-3 advancements)

Advanced: This is the adjustment used to increase the difficulty of the encounter; each adjustment increases the TN Equivalent by +5

Fan Flavour

by Matthew "GandalfOfBorg" Kearns

Elvish Longbow (2nd Age)

The bows of the Second Age Elves were near their pinnacle of craftsmanship. Simple, elegant, and deadly – these weapons were used with devastating effect against the hordes of Mordor. Each bow was of unique make as they were built for the archer, made to his specific height. It wasn't just the Elf but also the bow itself that lent toward the deadly effect when wielded; it was a rare event that an arrow went astray and didn't kill its target with one strike.

Damage: 2d6
Range: 30/50/100/175/+35*
Weight: 3 lbs
Price: 3 SP (Second Age); Priceless (Third Age)
Special: Accurate Edge
Craft TN: 15 (Second Age); 30 (Third Age)

Mordor Shortbow (2nd Age)

Poorly constructed and maintained, the shortbow of the Mordor orc was effective nonetheless from the sheer volume of arrows launched at their enemy, but more importantly, the poison staining the arrowhead that caused a prolonged and painful death (no cure is known by elves or men) if the wound wasn't immediately fatal. The make and design of these weapons hasn't improved in the armory of The Enemy between the Second and Third Ages.

Damage: 2d6-2
Range: 15/35/50/75/+15
Weight: 2 lbs
Price: 1 SP (Second Age, Third Age)
Special: Poison (see Swamp Orc Poison, HOF 22, page 13; add +5 to all TN's)
Craft TN: 15

Numenorean Steelbow

Not quite as traditional but hardly less effective was the steelbow of the Numenoreans. Though the art in which to craft such a weapon has been lost to the ages, the legend of it has persisted. If ever the means to craft such a bow was ever found or devised again, the craftsman's name would be renowned throughout Gondor. Not able to make the same distances as the elvish longbow, the steelbow was better at the shorter ranges, especially its effectiveness at piercing enemy armor.

Damage: 2d6
Range: 25/50/100/150/+30*
Weight: 3 lbs
Price: 5 GP (Second Age); Priceless (Third Age)
Special: Negates 3 AR at Point Blank, 2 AR at Short, and 1 AR at Medium ranges
Craft TN: 20 (Second Age); 30 (Third Age)

* Ranges reflect values as described in The Lord of the Rings: Weapons and Warfare.

Scroll of Isildur

"...there lies in Minas Tirith still, unread, I guess, by any save Saruman and myself since the kings failed, a scroll that Isildur made himself."

- Gandalf, The Fellowship of the Ring, II:2 The Council of Elrond

During the short time he spent in Minas Anor following the The Last Alliance, Isildur scribed a scroll detailing The One Ring and how he came by it. Any who gain possession or read the scroll receive a +5 bonus to tests related to The One Ring (identification, abilities, etc.).

Featured Creatures

Nwalmarog (S. Demon of Torment)

by Dustin R. Strong (dustinrstrong@hotmail.com)

"For by after-knowledge the wise declare that Melkor, ever watchful, was first aware of the awakening of the Quendi, and sent shadow and evil spirits to spy upon them and waylay them."

—The Silmarillion "Of the Coming of the Elves and the Captivity of Melkor"

Attributes: Bearing 20 (+7), Nimbleness 17 (+5), Perception 20 (+7), Strength 18 (+6)*, Vitality 18 (+6), Wits 16 (+5)*

Reactions: Stamina +6, Swiftness +7, Willpower +7*, Wisdom +7

Movement: 12 (24 in flight)

Size: Large (6 Wound levels, 2 Healthy)

Health: 24

Defence: 15

Courage: 3

Renown: 10

TN Equivalent: 15

Skills: Armed Combat: Natural Weapons (Fangs, Claws, Tail) +8, Intimidate (Fear) +12, Language: Sindarin +4, Language: Black Speech +8, Lore/Race: Elves +10, Observe (Spot, Smell, Hear) +10, Stealth (Hide, Sneak) +12, Track (Sense Power) +12, Unarmed Combat: Brawling (Grapple) +10

Edges: None

Flaws: None

Spells: Cloak of Shadow (ability), Command (ability), Evoke Fear (ability), Misdirection, Veiling Shadow, Waste

Abilities: Armor (7), Drawn to Power, Lure, Maddening Gaze, Multiple Attacks, Natural Weapons (Claws, 1d6; Fangs, 1d6; Tail, 2d6), Regenerate, Terror, Vulnerability (Sunlight)

Special Abilities

Drawn to Power

The demon is drawn to individuals of great power and renown, especially those of the First-born. When tracking such a foe, the demon may use the Track skill with Sense Power as a specialty to detect and locate a source. The ability works constantly using half normal skill ranks (rounded up) but at full ranks when concentrated upon, using an action to do so. When the demon tracks those of the elven race, it gains an affinity bonus from Lore/Race: Elves.

Lure

Despite the demon's grotesque appearance, even the strongest of the Free Peoples cannot resist the demon's screeching call. Any victim within 200 yards that fails a Contest of Wills test must make a full movement toward the demon and may take no other action unless they pass a second test at a -5 modifier or the demon is otherwise distracted.

Maddening Gaze

The eyes of the demon are filled with unbriddled hatred, anyone caught in the demon's gaze will begin to lose themselves in the demon's eyes and slowly slip into a state of unending madness and bloodlust. Any trapped by the demon's Lure ability must make a Contest of Wills against the demon. Failing the contest, will cause the defender to acquire 1 Corruption for a Failure, 2 for a Complete Failure, and 3 for a Disastrous Failure.. Once a character's Corruption equals or exceeds their Bearing, the character becomes a servant of the Enemy. So intent is this gaze, that the demon and his victim's spirits are intertwined, therefore, any attack on the demon will result in an equal amount of damage to his victim.

Regenerate

The demon recovers 1 point of Armor and 1 Wound Point for every hour spent in darkess or shadow.

Vulnerability (Sunlight)

Because the demon was created before the rising of the Sun, it is vulnerable to direct sunlight, suffering 2d6 Wounds per round while exposed. It also loses 1 point of Armor for each minute it remains in direct sunlight.

Description

This fell thrall of Morgoth is approximately 15 feet in height and a nearly 30-foot wingspan. It is almost skeletal in appearance with a thin, but tough, skin pulled tightly over the bones. It has deep red eyes that burn like fire and long, bony fingers and toes that are tipped with razor-like claws that can cleave through all but the toughest of armor.

History

Bred by Morgoth to hunt the Eldar during the Great Journey, their sole purpose was to corrupt Elves into ferocious beasts loyal to Morgoth. They dwelt in the lowest depths of Angband during the First Age where they tortured and twisted the strongest of Eldar captives into servants of the Enemy. Although most were destroyed with Angband, many have survived into the Third, and possibly, the Fourth Age.

Habitat

Found mostly in the key strongholds of the Enemy, such as Angband, Dol Guldor, Angmar, and Mordor. They may occasionally venture out from these places to actively "recruit" fresh replacements for their master's armies.

Society

Unknown

Usage

This demon is so terrible that it even haunts the dreams of Elves, preying upon them during the Great Journey. It works in concert with Dindair and Fell Hunters to spy on, terrorize, and capture Elves with the intent of turning them into orcs. These demons will definately be encountered if PCs should enter any of The Enemy's strongholds. They may also be encountered outside of these places should The Enemy be rebuilding his armies, such as after the great battles of the First Age, or during Sauron's consolidation of power prior to The War of the Ring. As if this demon is not enough trouble, they will usually be accompanied by other foul creatures, such as a Dindair and/or a Fell Hunter when outside their dungeons, using them to spy on and terrorize its victims while it stalks its prey.

Lesser Wyrm

by David "Issachar" D.

Attributes: Bearing 10 (+2), Nimbleness 8 (+1), Perception 12 (+3)*, Strength 14 (+4)*, Vitality 12 (+3), Wits 10 (+2)

Reactions: Stamina +4, Swiftness +3*, Willpower +2, Wisdom +3

Movement: 12

Size: Large (6 Wound levels, 2 Healthy)

Health: 16

Defence: 11

Courage: 1

Renown: 2

TN Equivalent: 12 (15 with Spellcasting ability)

Skills: Armed Combat: Natural Weapons (Claws, Fangs, Tail) +8, Climb +10, Inquire (Interrogate) +5, Insight +5, Intimidate (Fear) +5, Language: Sindarin +6, Language: Westron +6, Lore/Group: Servants of the Shadow +8, Lore/Realm: [Region of Lair] +6, Lore/Spellcraft: Sorcery +4*, Observe (Smell) +8, Persuade (Charm) +5, Stealth (Hide) +8, Track (Scent) +5, Unarmed Combat: Wrestling (Grapple) +8

Edges: Night-eyed 2

Flaws: None

Spells: *Dumbness*, *Evoke Fear*, *Forgetfulness*, *Sense Power*, *Veiling Shadow*, *Voice of Suasion*

Abilities: Armour (5), Constrict, Multiple Attacks, Natural Weapons (Claws, 1d6; Fangs, 2d6; Tail, 2d6), Sweep of Tail, Spellcasting*

* About one in four lesser wyrms has the Spellcasting ability and the listed ranks in Lore/Spellcraft: Sorcery.

Special Abilities

Constrict

When a lesser wyrm makes a successful Grab attack, on following actions it can wrap its tail around the victim and squeeze for damage equal to 2d6 plus the wyrm's Strength bonus. The wyrm can constrict a held opponent once per round without using an action; each additional constricting attack per round costs one action. While constricting an opponent with its tail, the wyrm takes a -2 penalty on all physical tests other than attacks on the constricted opponent.

Sweep of Tail

Any creature that sustains damage from a lesser wyrm's tail attack (Armed Combat only, not an Unarmed Combat attack made to Grab) and fails a TN 10 Strength or Nimbleness test (target's choice) is knocked down.

Description

Not all the dragon-kin created by Morgoth were great wyrms like Glaurung. Some were bred for other, subtler works than war and destruction. Of such kind are the lesser wyrms, so-called despite the fact that their size and aspect is still imposing to Men.

From snout to tail-tip these winglesss wyrms span about twenty feet on average, though nearly half this length is the tail. Their scaly hides are varying shades of dark green, brown, and black. Their legs are short, giving them the appearance of giant lizards, and indeed they move like such animals, climbing swiftly and easily over terrain and obstacles of all kinds.

History

No lesser wyrms survived the destruction of Angband, but some were already abroad in the world on their master's business. How this remnant survived and bred in the ensuing centuries is not known, for they do not love to consort with one another. Perhaps Morgoth-cultists employed sorcerous arts to preserve the species.

Habitat

Lesser wyrms love secrecy and make their lairs in caves, bogs, ruins, and tunnels dug with their own claws. They reside in sparsely populated areas, but not uninhabited lands, for they enjoy capturing and manipulating other creatures to serve as their spies and slaves.

Society

Lesser wyrms are proud and jealous, and do not willingly live or work together unless compelled to do so by a greater power.

Usage

A lesser wyrm makes a good "boss" enemy for low- to mid-level characters; it is also an enemy that can give your players some of the satisfaction of going on a dragon-slaying quest, without having to contend against the terrible power of a true dragon.

Hostile Haunts

A Problem with Trolls

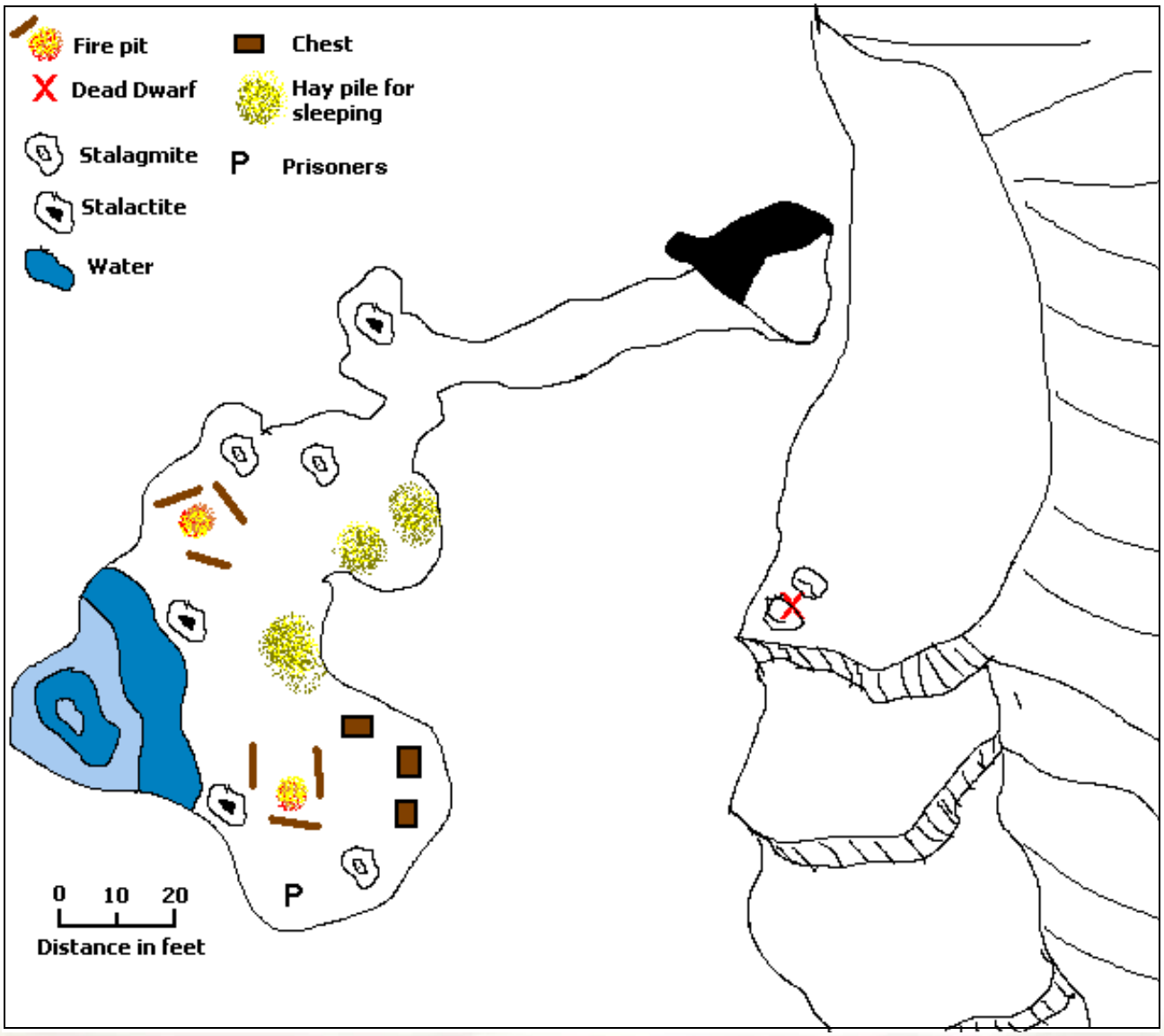
by Doug Joos

This Hostile Haunt is a very simple problem that a narrator can throw into any game whenever they need a quick encounter. The haunt is suggested for characters of Advancement Levels 4-5 and the Narrator may feel free to seed the Troll cave with any items and treasures that fit their game to a maximum of Hoard (2) in value.

The situation is there have been rumours of Trolls about and a patrol has gone missing – the patrol can be made up of Dwarves, Men, Hobbits or Elves. Outside the Trolls cave, a body of one of the patrol members lies crushed under a couple of large boulders. Not far from the body is the entrance to a dark cave, although firelight illuminates from deep within.

The challenge for the players is to rescue, or determine if the remaining patrol members still live. Unfortunately for our heroes, three Trolls – Ort, Bin, and Gnash – are going to do their best to make sure that none of their captives are rescued and that any foolhardy heroes are added to the catch.

Have fun!



Ort

Attributes: Bearing 8 (+1), Nimbleness 5 (+0), Perception 6 (+0), Strength 14 (+4)*, Vitality 14 (+4)*, Wits 5 (+0)

Reactions: Stamina +6*, Swiftness +3, Willpower +1, Wisdom +0

Defence: 10 Movement Rate: 12

Order: Barbarian

Order Abilities: Preferred Weapon (Troll-club)

Advancements: 7

Skills: Armed Combat: Clubs (Troll-club) +8, Intimidate (Power)+5, Language: Westron +4, Observe (Spot) +4, Ranged Combats: Thrown Weapons (Rocks) +7, Survival (Forests) +4, Track (Scent) +4, Unarmed Combat: Brawl (Punch) +7

Special Abilities: Armour (5), Vulnerability (sunlight turns permanently to storm)

Edges: Doughty, Hardy, Hammerhand, Hoard, Night-eyed 2

Weapons: Troll-club 3d6, Rocks 2d6+2, Fists 2d6+2

Size: Large (6 wound levels, 2 Healthy)

Health: 18 Courage: 3 TN Equivalent: 7

Bin

Attributes: Bearing 8 (+1), Nimbleness 5 (+0), Perception 6 (+0), Strength 14 (+4)*, Vitality 14 (+4)*, Wits 5 (+0)

Reactions: Stamina +6*, Swiftness +3, Willpower +1, Wisdom +0

Defence: 10 Movement Rate: 12

Order: Barbarian

Order Abilities: Preferred Weapon (Troll-club)

Advancements: 7

Skills: Armed Combat: Clubs (Troll-club) +8, Intimidate (Power)+5, Language: Westron +4, Observe (Spot) +4, Ranged Combats: Thrown Weapons (Rocks) +7, Survival (Forests) +4, Track (Scent) +4, Unarmed Combat: Brawl (Punch) +7

Special Abilities: Armour (5), Vulnerability (sunlight turns permanently to storm)

Edges: Doughty, Hardy, Hammerhand, Hoard, Night-eyed 2

Weapons: Troll-club 3d6, Rocks 2d6+2, Fists 2d6+2

Size: Large (6 wound levels, 2 Healthy)

Health: 18 Courage: 3

TN Equivalent: 7

Gnash

Attributes: Bearing 8 (+1), Nimbleness 5 (+0), Perception 6 (+0), Strength 14 (+4)*, Vitality 14 (+4)*, Wits 5 (+0)

Reactions: Stamina +6*, Swiftness +2, Willpower +1, Wisdom +0

Defence: 10 Movement Rate: 12

Order: Barbarian

Order Abilities: Preferred Weapon (Troll-club)

Advancements: 5

Skills: Armed Combat: Clubs (Troll-club) +7, Intimidate (Power)+5, Language: Westron +4, Observe (Spot) +4, Ranged Combats: Thrown Weapons (Rocks) +5, Survival (Forests) +4, Track (Scent) +4, Unarmed Combat: Brawl (Punch) +6

Special Abilities: Armour (4), Vulnerability (sunlight turns permanently to storm)

Edges: Doughty, Hardy, Hammerhand, Hoard, Night-eyed 2

Weapons: Troll-club 3d6, Rocks 2d6+2, Fists 2d6+2

Size: Large (6 wound levels, 2 Healthy)

Health: 18 Courage: 3 TN Equivalent: 7

Advancement Pick Histories

Ort and Bin

1: +2 Unarmed Combat: Brawl, +1 Armour

2: +2 Ranged Combat, +2 Track, +1 Observe

3: +4 Unarmed Combat: Brawl, Punch Specialty

4: +1 Swiftness, Doughty

5: +1 Swiftness, Hammerhand

6: +1 Armour, +1 Armed Combat, +1 Unarmed Combat

7: +1 Swiftness, +2 Ranged Combat

Gnash

1: +2 Unarmed Combat: Brawl, +1 Armour

2: +2 Ranged Combat, +2 Track, +1 Observe

3: +4 Unarmed Combat: Brawl, Punch Specialty

4: +1 Swiftness, Doughty

5: +1 Swiftness, Hammerhand

The Road Goes Ever On...

The Minstrel's Lament

by Doug Joos

After the destruction of Morgoth, the last two Silmarils were recovered from his Crown. By this time, only Maedhros and Maglor remained of Fëanor's sons, and Maglor came close to repenting the Oath. Wearily, he accompanied his brother in the theft of the Silmarils, but their evil deeds in recovering them meant that the holy Jewels burned their skin. Maedhros in despair leapt into a fiery fissure, and Maglor, the last of the Sons of Fëanor to survive, cast his Silmaril into the Sea. Legend says that he still wanders the shores of the World, singing laments for his despair and regret.

Introduction

"The Minstrel's Lament" is an adventure for use with *The Lord of the Rings Roleplaying Game* by Decipher, taking place in the Third Age during any year the Narrator chooses between the Necromancer's reign in Dol Guldur until his return to Mordor. "The Minstrel's Lament" is suitable for a company of 4-5 characters ranging from 6 Advancements and up. The adventure requires a Loremaster in the party, or one that the PC's have access to.

Narrators will require the use of *The Lord of the Rings: Core Rule Book*, *Fell Beasts and Wondrous Magic*, *Paths of the Wise*, *The Two Towers Sourcebook* and a few issues of the Hall of Fire (mentioned below) for running this adventure.

The adventure takes place off the coast of Forlindon where a small town of Men has been plagued by eerie visitors and bizarre creatures. Living so close to the Elves has made these folk more at ease with the unexplainable, but still, things have become very strange. Whether it is the wailing fogs, the eerie visions, or the Singing Cave – the townsfolk would like some answers to their problems. Folk have even gone missing!

Players that plan to take part in this adventure should not read any further.

Adventure Synopsis

A series of events have been plaguing the small, seaside hamlet of Lond Aer [*S. Sea Haven*], from strange fogs with a far-off singing voice coming in off the ocean to captains steering their ships into rocks where none could be seen prior, and now a local captain of considerable wealth has gone missing.

Rumours of a singing cave at the prominence of the coastline have been part of the town's history for years. It is also the location of a dangerous torrent of ocean and passing ships have been lost.

The folk of the town have raised a reward to pay to any captain or adventurer who is willing to solve the mystery of the cave and to bring back the missing captain – or at least determine his fate.

What the heroes don't know is that the trail they will start down will take them leagues further north and three ages into the past!

Adventure Hooks

The Narrator may use the following suggested hooks to bring the characters into the story or may feel free to create her own.

- A Loremaster has been on a quest to find any trace or evidence of Maglor the Minstrel, last son of Fëanor, and if he still lives in Middle-earth. Having heard of the odd events that have plagued Lond Aer, the Loremaster has made his way to the town to investigate.
- The adventurers have heard about the reward being offered by the folk of Lond Aer and have come to see if they can find the lost captain and win the bounty.
- Curiosity from the rumours spread by mariners plying the ocean trade routes have brought the party of adventurers in search of treasures and fame.
- The strange apparitions and haunting voices have terrorized the town and brought life to a standstill. Sailors will not venture out on the ocean to bring in their catch and businesses have had to close their doors. The townsfolk decide that something must be done or the hamlet will perish. A plea is made to local warriors to solve the mystery of the haunting.

Lond Aer

The town of Lond Aer is where the story will begin (unless the Narrator derives her own hook) and may operate as a base of operation for the characters to garner supplies or to rest and heal. The following is a description of the town and its inhabitants, but a Narrator is free to make any changes necessary for her story. There are quite a few resources that can be used from the *Hall of Fire* such as the Common Folk: Middlemen article or any of the Trusted Locales – see the *Hall of Fire* Index to reference these issues.

The greatest obstacle that the characters will need to overcome within Lond Aer is trust – the people that inhabit the desolate lands of old Arnor are not known to open up to strangers. The following rules are for the Narrator to use when the PC's wish to try and inquire about the goings on in the area.

One square = 10 feet
4
4
2
4
3
6
5
8
7
9
10
11
12
Main Street

Trust

If the Narrator has made one of the PC's a local, then the following table is unnecessary. If not, then due to the strange happenings and recent events, the characters will need to perform a Bearing or Persuade test to determine how they will be received.

The base TN for the test is 10, but the Narrator will need to add any applicable modifiers from the table below:

TABLE 1. BEARING / PERSUADE TEST MODIFIERS

-2/+2	Character(s) demonstrate evidence of sincerity / do not demonstrate evidence of sincerity
-3/+3	Character(s) are in positions of authority or part of well known / suspicious groups or organizations (i.e. a captain, noble, or ranger)
-1	Per point of Renown modifier of the person making the test
Bonus modifier based on Bearing / Persuade DOS	
-3	Disastrous Failure
-1	Complete Failure
0	Marginal Success
+1	Complete Success
+2	Superior Success
+3	Extraordinary Success

Any success on the Bearing / Persuade test means that townsfolk will open up to them in varying levels of detail. Now it is necessary for the players to roll Inquire tests to glean information. The character gains the additional bonus listed above to add to any Inquire tests or Persuade tests to glean information based on their Degree of Success (DOS).

Now the player may roll his Inquire test (plus all bonuses and modifiers) and again the DOS will determine how much is revealed. The Narrator will compare the result to the table below to disseminate information. She may also wish to give them the information based on how well they role-play the conversations. The table gives only sample replies to any inquiries.

TABLE 2. TYPES OF RESPONSES BY DOS

TN 5	Curt and short (*i.e. It is a strange fog… drifts in, drifts out.*)
TN 10	Simple and guarded, short answers containing little detail (*i.e. It is a strange fog… always seems to roll in this time of day. Sends us folk runnin' to our homes.*)
TN 15	Detailed and open answers (*i.e. This fog began some years ago and it has been a nuisance ever since. We've lost folk out on the water and the rocks… wait until you start to hear the singing! You'll wish you'd passed this town by.*)
TN 20	At a TN 20 or greater, the inquirer will receive any information that can be possibly gleaned (*i.e. Rumor has it that a cave sits just north of here and the songs emanate from within.*)

A brief history…

During the Years of the Trees, when the Noldor still lived within the holy realm of Valinor, Fëanor created the Silmarils. They were his most cherished creations and he kept them guarded from all, including the Valar.

But Melkor desired the brilliant stones and plotted against the Elves and the Valar, disseminating lies to drive a rift between the peoples. With the aid of Ungoliant, the Dark Lord made his move – the giant spider destroyed the Two Trees, darkening the land and allowing Melkor to steal within Fëanor's vaults and take the stones, along with other precious treasures. This done, the two clothed themselves in utter darkness and fled from the holy realm.

Fëanor, along with his seven sons, made a terrible Oath to hunt down Melkor, re-named Morgoth Bauglir by the master craftsman, and take back what was theirs. Many of their kin followed them as they marched from Valinor back to Middle-earth and commenced an Age-long war.

Now Maglor was the second-born son of Fëanor and he was considered one of the greatest minstrels to ever be heard in all the realm of Arda. It is said he inherited the more gentle spirit of his mother and could have taken a different path and repented of his Oath, but it was not to be.

In the end, Morgoth was toppled and the last two stones retrieved. Driven by their Oath, Maedhros and Maglor once again spilt the blood of their kin and took the treasures in the night. Unfortunately, the two found that the radiance of the stones burnt their flesh and caused them madness. Maedhros hurled himself over a chasm and plummeted deep into the earth with his Silmaril, while Maglor hurled his into the sea.

It is said the last surviving son of Fëanor still walks along the northern shoreline where the ocean had drowned the land that once was his, singing laments for his despair and regret.

Strange Happenings (Maglor's Effect)

Unbeknownst to the folk that live around the area that once was known as Maglor's Gap prior to the cataclysm of the First Age, as well as to Maglor himself, is that the Noldor's pain has caused an ill-effect. The songs and dirges he sang over the many years of his wanderings, and the power that he put forth, have left a permanent impression, if not a memory, upon the land. Fogs rise at strange times and the sound of sobbing can be heard; the wind blows and laughter dances throughout. Many folk speak of seeing phantoms and ghosts walking about, and many fine captains speak of even stranger happenings on the sea. The area has lost quite a few of her vessels in these random occurrences.

The Narrator is to understand that Maglor is not out there with malicious intent trying to cause anyone harm – in fact, only legend speaks of a singing, sad Elf wandering the shores. But the power that is contained within the great Noldor has emanated these troubles without his knowledge.

At any random time, the Narrator will use these effects to challenge the PC's. Feelings of occasional sadness, anger, or glee may overcome the characters as they move about the town and they may also experience visions, both eerie and frightening or inspiring. The Narrator may apply Willpower tests of varying difficulty for these strange effects to overcome the emotional fluctuations or to disbelieve a vision.

Understand, the town of Lond Aer is the furthest southern location that is being effected by Maglor's despair and so the strange occurrences are not going to be as great as those in the locations to the north. Failures in these tests will cause strange behavior amongst the PC's, while successes will just have the PC's questioning their perception.

The Narrator may use the Random Effects table below at any time, in varying degrees of difficulty, and as often as she would like to determine an effect. The further north the PC's go towards Maglor's Gap, the more often these random effects will occur.

TABLE 3. MAGLOR'S RANDOM EFFECTS

2-5	Fog rises and a feeling of despair fills all that are enveloped by it.
6-9	The wind blows and joy fills those that are enveloped by it.
10	A benign phantom appears at a random moment and may confuse or aid the PC's.
11	A hateful phantom appears at a random moment and may confuse or harass the PC's.
12	A horror of the First Age appears at a random moment and may harass the PC's.

- The Narrator will use the Fear Tables from the Core Rule book to challenge the PC's with despair or joy. The characters will not necessarily be overcome with fear, but with the feeling of utter loss or maddening happiness. Despair/Joy (Fear) penalties will affect the PC's for a duration of the Narrator's choosing, or a length in hours equal to their Wits minus their Willpower (1 hour minimum). Unaffected characters may attempt to rally their comrades with Inspire tests – see the mechanics, under the description of Inspire in the CRB and/or HOF #38, to work out these actions. The Narrator determines the TN's for any despair/joy tests and modifiers to be applied, although no test should be less than TN 10 south of the singing cave, or TN 12 around Maglor's Gap and the Broken Tower.
- PC's who are successful in their rolls to overcome the overwhelming despair or fear may be granted a bonus to any actions for a determined period of time, by the Narrator. This reflects how the effects of Maglor may stir the heart of a PC to greater action instead of debilitating them (*i.e. the PC is filled with happiness and is able to use the joy to achieve greater effects*). This is totally at the Narrator's discretion.
- The benign phantom is caused by Maglor's minstrel power of Woven Words and may be a memory of the ancient Elf or it could be the PC himself generating the illusion – seeing what he wants to see. In any case, the phantom can be used by the Narrator to confuse or aid the PC's in their search. The PC's may make Willpower tests to disbelieve the phantom's existence, as determined by the Narrator. Any successful character may attempt to Persuade his comrades that the phantom is not real, but to do so will require a TN 10 test plus the difference of the failed Willpower test (*i.e. Durgil attempts to Persuade Fengel that the sad Elf before him is not real; Fengel failed his Willpower test by 6 points. Durgil needs to make a Persuade test TN 16.*) Like the tests for Despair and Joy, the minimum TN's should be 10 (plus modifiers) south of the Singing Cave and 12 around Maglor's Gap. All magic, powers, traits and abilities will accompany the benign phantom as if it were truly real, at the Narrator's complete discretion.
- Unlike the benign phantom, the hateful phantom is a bad memory of Maglor's and will be aggressive. This illusion is a concoction of Maglor's Woven Words and the sorcery of Morgoth called Shadows and Phantoms. It attempts to harm the PC's however possible, although the 'harm' is not real. PC's may believe they are being wounded or even believe themselves slain, but will awaken later after a number of hours equal to 12 minus their Vitality (1 hour minimum). Willpower tests may be made to disbelieve the malevolent phantom's existence as stated above, but PC's must be a little more wary, for these phantoms could potentially slay them. Any PC test against the phantom resulting in an Extraordinary failure (*i.e. Armed Combat, Willpower*) will require the PC to make another Willpower test TN 5 or fall dead of heart failure from fear. All magic, powers, traits and abilities will accompany the hateful phantom as if it were truly real, at the Narrator's discretion.
- The First Age horror will be a nightmare of Maglor; something dredged up from his time when he warred against Morgoth. It could be a Balrog or even a Dragon, set with the desire to waylay the PC's. All rules and conditions apply with the horror like the malevolent phantom except that the TN's are harder to beat – the minimum TN's should be 12 (plus modifiers) south of the Singing Cave and 15 around Maglor's Gap; Disastrous Failures will require a TN 10 Willpower test result to keep from truly being slain. All magic, powers, traits and abilities will accompany the First Age horror as if it were truly real, at the Narrator's complete discretion.
- Above all – until disbelieved, the phantoms will be as real to the PC's as they are to each other.

The Town

Lond Aer is a depressed fishing village, yet it is a safe anchorage for many of the ships that still ply the northern seas. The folk are of Middle-man stock and are rustic in their ways. They have had communications and dealings with the Elves of Lindon to the south, but those have been few and far between.

The town sits inland of the main harbor (not pictured, but at the southern end of the map) and has a few conveniences for the sailors that may occasion here. There is a tavern called the Red Pelican; a discreet brothel; a talented shipwright; and a few craftsman that tailor fishing supplies, sails, barrels, glass, and woodworks.

The numbers on the map do not pertain to any assigned location description, but the Narrator is advised to pre-seed the town with any NPC's and businesses that they want to stand out for when the PC's visit. The longer the Narrator uses the town to give out rumors and lies, the more intriguing the story may be.

There is one NPC that will be recognized from Lond Aer and that is the lost captain in Hook #2. He will be described in a later scene.

SCENE 1: THE SINGING CAVE

Fog has settled again over the small town of Lond Aer and questions continue to be asked about the ill feelings that seem to permeate everything with the misty blanket.

The player characters (PC's) find themselves in the town's port tavern after a lengthy sea or overland journey. The fog that has drifted in from the north will hinder both means of travel and not until the PC's enter the small inn are they aware of any townsfolk being about. The hospitality proves to be as cold and damp as the fog that drifts outside.

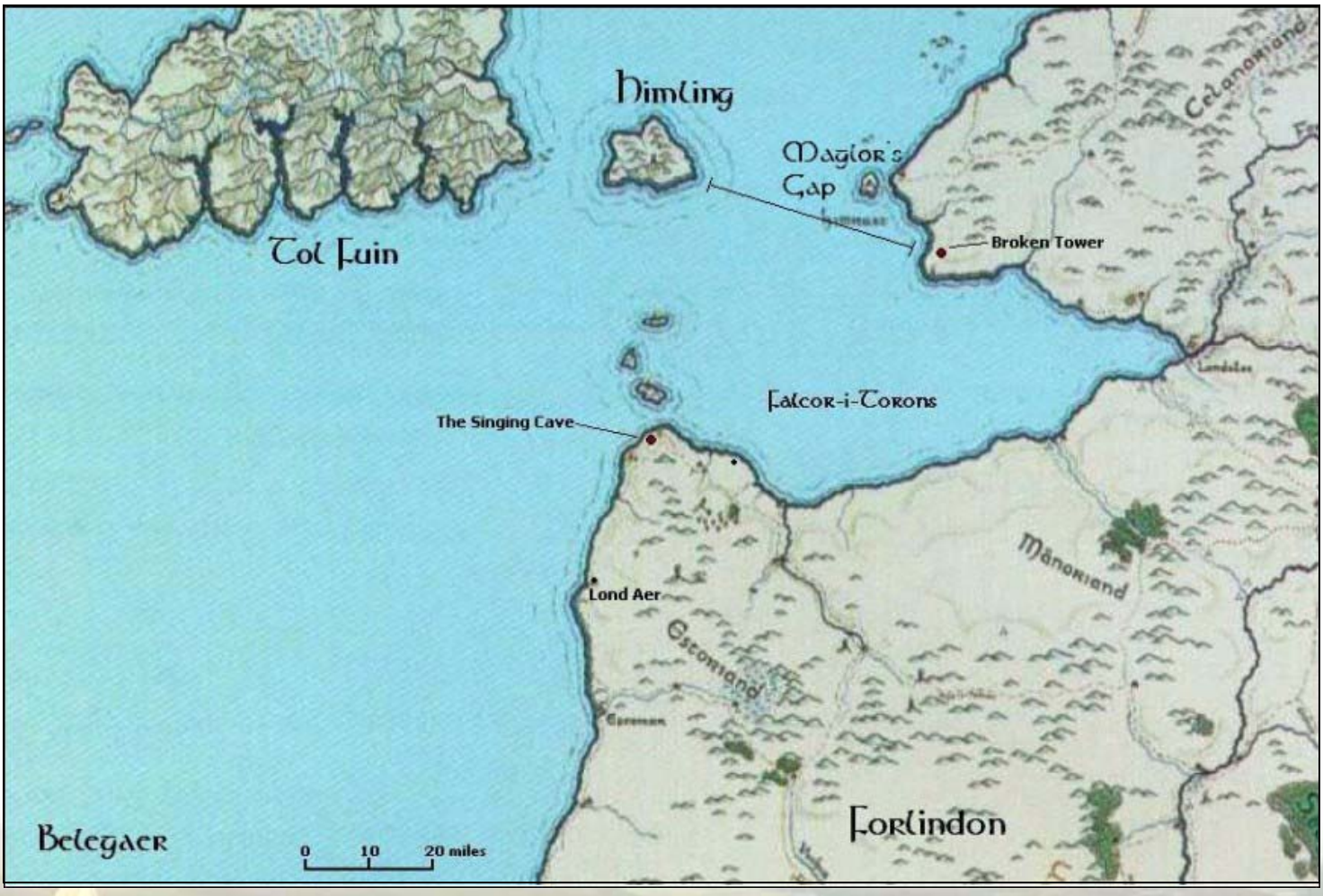
Eventually through good role-playing and dice rolling (see above), the PC's will glean the information that they sought or will be enticed by what they are told to investigate. The first place the information will point to is the Singing Cave.

Travel to the Singing Cave will require a sea or overland journey. The cave lies 22 miles north of the town of Lond Aer and is precariously positioned in the cliff's side, close to the raging tide. Entry into the cave can only be achieved by sea or if the PC's wish to attempt a dangerous climb down the cliff's face. Either opportunity is determined by the tides – when the tide is out, the cavern entrance is exposed enough to enter. If the tide were in, even though it can be seen, the smashing, roiling water would make swimming in suicidal.

The tests required to find the cave are as follows:

- A Lore/Realm: Lindon (Coastline) TN 12 test must be achieved for each 5 miles of travel.
- Any failed test will require the test be re-attempted at a +2 to the TN per failure.
- Successful DOS will reduce the next navigation test by -1 for Complete, -2 for Superior and -3 for Extraordinary.

Once the cave is located, whether by land or sea, the PC's must now either pilot into the dangerous rock strewn waters or attempt the climb. In any case, the PC's will begin to hear a soft, mournful singing coming from the cave. Narrators will want to remember the effects of Maglor's despair (described above) if they wish to increase the challenges faced by the PC's.



By Sea

To approach the cave by sea requires an Extended Test TN 37 made up of the following skills: Lore/Realm: Sea (Belegaer) TN 10, Observe (Spot) TN 12, Sea-craft (Sailing) TN 15. The Observe test allows the lookouts to see any potential submerged hazards (all physical modifiers apply); the Lore test will bring into play all knowledge know of the area and its hazards; and of course, the Sea-craft test will pilot the ship in safely to anchorage; using a boat (specialty Boating) instead of a ship increases the Sea-craft TN by at least +5. The duration of the approach is two hours, reduced by degree of success. Any failed component of the extended test will cause the ship to hit the rocky coastline. The Narrator may want to consult the *Hall of Fire* issues 8-10 for more information on conducting sea mechanics.

Once safely anchored, the PC's will need to wait until low tide to cross from the ship to the cave. They may attempt to cross by making a Swim test TN 15, or using a launch to oar over. Safely navigating the launch will require a Sea-craft (Sailing) TN 10.

By Land

To enter the cave from the top of the cliff will require an 85' rope and an iron will. The climb down should only be attempted by the most agile and will require a series of three Climb tests TN 12 (rope grants a +1 bonus; climbing gear grants a separate +2 bonus). Failing any test will cause the person to lose their grip and plummet to the smashing tides below.

Failing the first Climb test will cause the individual to fall the full height and sustain 6d6+24 damage (Acrobatics TN 30 test to reduce by half). Failing the second will cause 5d6+18 (Acrobatics TN 25), or the third 3d6+6 (Acrobatics TN 15). If the character survives the fall, they still need to worry about the crushing sea and thus must make a Swim test TN 15 to safely get himself upon the cave entrance ledge.

Scene 2: Forgotten

The interior of the Singing Cave is damp and smells heavily of the salt water that thrashes at its entrance. Crabs and other aquatic creatures scurry about or swim in small pools of water while waiting for the tide to come back in and return them to the sea. Light is only at the entrance of the cave and disappears with the end of day, so the PC's will need to have some sort of illumination of their own, be it natural or magic.

Once lit, the cave entrance shows the extent of flooding that occurs when the tide comes in, which is the greater part of area 1. The characters have an eight-hour window between tides and the Narrator will want to closely monitor the time spent in the cave. The longer they remain, the more peril they will be in (see below). The ever-present singing continues as the PC's move into the cave and after awhile will become rather maddening.

There are a number of challenges within the Singing Cave for the PC's to face, but the most dangerous is that of losing the memory of who they are. Maglor spent many years living here and his magical abilities have been imprinted but have been twisted by his despair. Any PC who stays within the cave for too long may fall under the Forgetfulness enchantment that lies over the place, and they may lose their mind. Maglor never practiced sorcery, but his own desire to forget what he and his kin had done has caused this sorcerous effect to manifest.

For each hour spent in the cave, the PC's must make a Willpower test TN 12 to overcome the effects of the Forgetfulness. If they fail, they will be affected by the spell and forget who and where they are for 1 hour. If there is no one to guide them out of the cave, or if the tide is in, they will continue to need to make a Willpower test for each hour and each additional failure increases the length of the effect by a multiple of 3 (thus 3 hours for a second failure, six hours for a third) until the character loses all memory of who they were. What's worse, the tormenting effects of Maglor's phantoms sends them spiraling into a pit of insanity.

1. **Cave Entrance** – the entrance of the Singing Cave is a natural fissure created by the pounding of the sea. There are several columns of stone that rise from the floor to the ceiling providing natural support. These columns show evidence of erosion from the constant flow of water.

The cave entrance is also the home of a sad spirit that has lost all recollection of who or what it was. The spirit will attempt to contact the PC's and try to get answers as to where, when, who and what it is, but unfortunately its Icy Grasp will be seen as attacks and may cause combat to break out. The PC's may try to communicate with the spirit, but this cannot be achieved and so in time it must be destroyed to avoid the constant numbing effects of its touch. See the stat block below for the sad spirit.

Except for a scattering of items on the floor (i.e. coins, belt buckle, ring), area 1 has no treasures to speak of.

2. **The Mad Maze** – not only is the Forgetfulness manifest throughout the cave, but here in the maze of tunnels illusions appear and fade at random. From images of the First Age and the glories that Maglor knew to the sad life he knows now, the PC's will experience a multitude of visions. The illusionary effect will be exacerbated by the possible Forgetfulness that the PC's may be experiencing. In any case, the place is very dangerous and the floor throughout is littered with the remains of other foolish adventurers who sought out the Singing Cave.

The Narrator may use either the Woven Words effects under the Minstrel's abilities, or may use the mechanics for Shadows and Phantoms. She may create any illusion she wishes, threatening or not, and have it disappear of its own accord or have the PC's need to disbelieve it with a Willpower test (see Maglor's effect above).

The maze begins at the top of a long stairwell that rises up over 45'. It weaves in many directions that lead to dead ends and turnabouts, although one passage will lead the PC's out and into area 3.

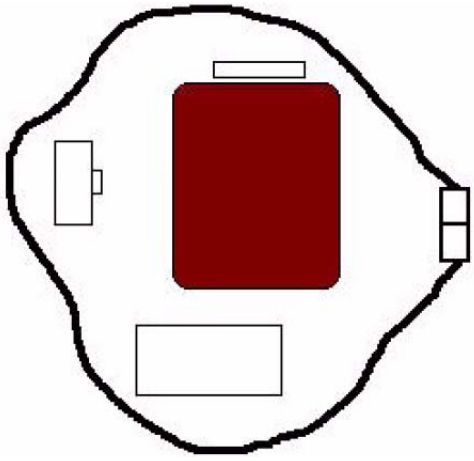
It is within the Mad Maze that the PC's will locate the lost captain of Lond Aer. He is lost in his forgotten mind and is weak from hunger and thirst. Although he may be rescued from the cave, he is too far gone to remember who he was and would need to be re-taught everything he once knew. See the captain's stat block below.

3. **Underground Falls** – area 3 will reveal the first evidence of Maglor ever being present here; sitting in a corner near what looks to be a pile of straw for sleeping is an ornate lyre. The instrument gleams from the PC's light source, revealing its golden inlays. It is a masterwork and is in perfect tune and an Appraise test TN 10 will reveal it to be of Elven craftsmanship. The lyre conveys, to Minstrels only, a +3 bonus to Perform (Play Instrument), and also grants a +2 bonus to Inspire tests or to any Bearing/Willpower tests that may be needed to soothe or calm.

The other thing of interest in this area will be the roaring sound of water. A torrent flows out of a large fissure in the west wall and rushes through the room to disappear in another fissure to the east. The underground river is roughly eight feet in width and is dangerously fast moving. If any were to step into the rush they would risk being swept off their feet and drawn into the eastern fissure where they would be drowned in a water and stone grave.

Large chunks of rock litter the floor, broken away by the force of the torrent. Beyond the stream, barely visible from the lack of light and the spray of water, are two stone doors.

To cross the stream will require either a Strength test TN 15 or a means to subdue the water (i.e. Watershaping). The PC's may also try to call upon the Vala Ulmo for aid and in so doing trigger Maglor's own Sanctuary power. Speaking the Lord of Waters' name aloud causes the surging underground stream to relent for two minutes. It takes an hour before the power word may be used again (unless spoken by Maglor himself).



4. **Maglor's Sanctuary** – The double doors are not locked and swing back with the mere push of a hand. It is obvious the Noldor prince had employed the aid of the Dwarves of Belegost or Nogrod long ago in the building of his sanctuary. Within, the PC's will find three beautifully crafted dwarven lanterns with panes of poured colored glass – though they are unlit, their oil chambers empty and the wicks dry rotted away. A large, rotting carpet covers the floor and gives off a foul odor. Furniture sits about unused, seeming for decades, as dust and cobwebs cover all.

If they explore the chamber, the PC's will find evidence that this is the actual sanctuary of the son of Fëanor. There are treasures here of varying value that the Narrator may edit as she pleases. I present the list of items for the Narrator to tweak as needed to stay within the realm of her game.

- An elven-crafted lute
- An elven-crafted silver flute
- A burgundy tunic that shows no sign of age
- A pair of elven slippers/shoes
- Sheets of vellum that contain the prose of the minstrel – three poems and four songs (these would be very valuable as heirlooms to the Noldor)
- A long, etched blade made by the hands of elves from the First Age wars of Beleriand

Forgotten Spirit

ATTRIBUTES: Brg 10 (+2), Nim 10 (+2), Per 9 (+1), Vit 8 (+1) Wits 10 (+2)

REACTIONS: Sta +3, Swi +5, Wil +5, Wis +3

MOVEMENT RATE: 6

SKILLS: Armed Combat +8, Conceal +3, Debate +3, Games +5, Inquire +4, Intimidate (Fear) +8, Observe (Spot, Hear) +6, Language (Westron) +8, Language (Sindarin) +7, Persuade +5

SPECIAL ABILITIES: Icy Touch, Incorporeal, Invisible, Possession, Rejuvenation, Telekinesis, Terror, Undead Stamina, Vulnerability (fire and enchanted weapons inflict half damage)

SIZE: Medium

TN EQUIVALENT: 5+

UNIQUE SPECIAL ABILITIES

Icy Touch: A ghost's grasp is cold and lethal. Every successful hit by an Unarmed Combat test, or every round held in a grab by the ghost, drains the victim of 2 points of Strength and Vitality (may make a Stamina save TN 15 + the ghost's Bearing modifier). The victim is paralyzed when either attribute reaches 0, and when both attributes reach 0 the victim dies. If the victim is not killed lost points return normally (see CRB p. 247), or are fully restored upon the application of a Healing-spell.

Incorporeal: A ghost's form is insubstantial. They float above the ground and can pass through solid matter unhindered, but cannot manipulate physical objects by their own means. Ghosts are immune to heat, cold, falling, normal weapons, poison, and corrosives. However, they are vulnerable to fire and enchanted weapons (any weapon with at least a +1 enchantment bonus, or appropriate bane-spell).

Invisible: The ghost is generally invisible but can be 'felt' (Perception TN 10 + ghost's Bearing modifier) but not seen, Defence score is 20. The ghost may manifest itself, becoming visible but remaining incorporeal. When manifested, the Defence of the ghost returns to 10 + its Nimbleness modifier.

Possession: Once per day, the ghost may target a Man, Hobbit, or Dwarf in an attempt to take over his or her body. The ghost and the target engage in a Contest of Wills (see page 222 of the CRB). If the ghost wins, the body is possessed until the ghost chooses to leave it. If the target wins, the ghost may not try to possess another being until the next day. A ghost inhabiting a body will retain its own statistics plus all physical statistics of its captured body (i.e. strength, nimbleness, health, etc.). If the host body is slain by violence before the ghost can leave, it will be slain as well (see below, rejuvenation).

Rejuvenation: Killing a ghost in most cases is difficult at best; the dead spirit will often "restore" itself after 2d6 days. As a rule, the only way to get rid of a ghost for sure is to determine the reason for its unrest and set right whatever prevents it from resting in peace.

Telekinesis: The ghost can move things with its mind once per round as a free action, the effects similar to Wizard's Hand, except the ghost need not make any test to cast or save against weariness. Some ghosts with a Bearing of at least 13 may manifest this power similar to Wizard's Fist.

Undead Stamina: Ghosts need never eat or drink, take no damage from physical attacks, heal all injuries at five times the normal rate, have no Weariness levels and need not make Stamina tests to resist weariness, and are not affected by critical hits (from superior or higher successes, although the Narrator may apply additional affects), stun attacks, poison or disease.

Captain Dervorian

RACE: Middle-man, Eriadorian

GENDER: Male

RACIAL ABILITIES: Skilled, Adaptable, Dominion of Man

ATTRIBUTES: Bearing 9 (+1)*, Nimbleness 10 (+2), Perception 9 (+1)*, Strength 8 (+1), Vitality 8 (+1), Wits 9 (+1)

REACTIONS: Stamina +3*, Swiftness +2, Willpower +1, Wisdom +1

DEFENCE: 12

ORDERS: Mariner

ORDER ABILITIES: Sea Legs, Ship

ADVANCEMENTS: 2

SKILLS: Acrobatics +3, Armed Combat +4, Climb +3, Games +1, Jump +4, Language (Westron) +6, Language (Sindarin) +5, Lore/Realm: Sea (Belegaer) +6, Lore/Realm: Lindon +5, Lore/Other (Weather Patterns)+3, Lore: (Tides) +3, Observe +1, Ranged Combat +2, Sea-craft +7, Swim +3, Weather-sense +2

EDGES: Sense of Direction, Ambidextrous **FLAWS:** None

SIZE: Medium (6 Wound Levels, 1 Healthy)

HEALTH: 9 **COURAGE:** 4

**Dervorin has lost his memory; all skills are considered 0 (zero)

SCENE 3: MAGLOR'S TRAIL

One more treasure can be found within the sanctuary of Maglor and the clue for the PC's to follow the elf – another page of vellum containing a journal of sorts. If the adventure began with the Loremaster hook, on the trail of the Noldor prince, this will be where the adventure begins for them. If the PC's just went out in search of the lost captain, then they will need to decide if they wish to travel on further, or return for the ransom.

To read the journal, the PC's must have a Language: Elven (Quenya) skill rank of at least 6, and they must make a test roll against their skill at a TN 12.

Excerpt from Maglor's journal…

From Dorthonion to Himring
and all lands between,
With gilded shield and helms so tall
spears lit with morning gleam,
We watch for Shadow ever creeping
to break upon our leaguer,
But unattained our sacred jewels and
an Oath that leaves us eager.

Yet to the east under mountains blue
tween both the Gelions,
The gap I watch, called by my name,
in tower built lo river's run.
To await the call once more to arms…

The page smears towards the bottom and become illegible due to dampness, which leaves the reader with a bit of a trail to follow. Lore tests must be attempted to put together where the mentioned landmarks lie so that the PC's can follow on.

This scene is left entirely in the Narrator's hands to generate challenges along the way, both with tests and any aggressors. The scene can be as short or as long as the Narrator wishes, but shouldn't be a give me. It is a great opportunity for Loremaster characters to bring all of their traits and abilities to bear and for them to be the hero, so be sure to give them a challenge.

The PC's can continue to travel overland, taking the long road to find the tower. The Narrator can use travel weariness, supply shortages, and the desolation of the area as key hindrances for the PC's. Remember also, the effects of Maglor become more potent as the PC's move north.

An ocean crossing is also an option, and the Narrator can take the PC's to Himling or Tol Fuin in an attempt to confuse them, or to make them find more clues of where Maglor's Gap was. But the Narrator will want to prepare for this scene with multiple exciting challenges and clues that all point back to the mainland where the broken tower stands.

SCENE 4: THE BROKEN TOWER

The river Greater Gelion was misshaped like all other things left behind by the cataclysm of the First Age. What once was a long river that flowed through East Beleriand is now a short flow from the Blue Mountains to the Belegaer. The mouth of the river has formed a delta and it has flooded over its walls and immersed the flats around the Broken Tower in murky waters. The waters are cold and dark although within can be seen faint lights.

Like many of the battlegrounds of Middle-earth, the Gap of Maglor saw the loss of countless folk on both sides and now these spirits haunt the waters as Marsh-wraiths. The stat block and description of the Marsh-wraith can be found on page 89 of *The Two Towers* Sourcebook.

To get to the broken tower, the PC's will need to cross over small islands as well as enter into the chill waters until they come to the

dilapidated structure. The Narrator may have as many of the Marsh-wraiths on hand to challenge the PC's as she wishes. She may also require Swim tests or Acrobatics tests to keep from harming themselves on the ancient stones that surround the tower. Remember to use all physical test modifiers that apply plus Maglor's Effect.

At this point the PC's may be used to the illusions and mood shifting effects caused by the Noldorin prince, so the Narrator may offer bonuses to overcome the effects (but remember the TN are also higher when in close proximity to the tower.)

The tower itself is two stories with a main entrance into the first floor and a wrapping exterior stair that goes up to the second. If the PC's investigate the first floor they will find a large chamber that no longer discloses any purpose as to what it was once for. It certainly can be assumed that it once housed a great host of elves that guarded the northeast gap from the forces of Morgoth.

Now the chamber has become home to more foul spirits that are attracted by the despair that seems to emanate from the tower. Darkness permeates the entire room, unless the PC's have a light source of their own, and the hunters within use it to their best ability.

Within the first floor chamber are seven Mewlips that have not tasted fresh meat in a long time. They will scamper through the shadows to take up the most advantageous position to attack the PC's. The Narrator may adjust the number of undead creatures as necessary to create a challenge for the players.

Note to Narrator – although the mewlips do not discriminate between elf or man, they are cowed by the immense power of the Sad Elf on the second floor of the tower and thus leave him be.

MEWLIPS (GHOULS)

ATTRIBUTES: Bearing (+0), Nimbleness 10 (+2), Perception 8 (+1), Strength 8 (+1)*, Vitality 8 (+1)*, Wits (-1)

REACTIONS: Stamina +1, Swiftness +3*, Willpower +1, Wisdom +0

DEFENCE: 12 **MOVEMENT RATE:** 6

SKILLS: Armed Combat: Natural Weapons (Claws) +4, Intimidate (Fear) +3, Observe (Smell) +5, Run +6, Stealth (Shadow) +5, Track (Scent) +5, Unarmed Combat (any) +4

EDGES: None

SPECIAL ABILITIES: Ferocity (killing prey), Horrid Bite, Natural Weapon: Claws, Terror, Undead Stamina, Vulnerability (fire and enchanted weapons inflict full damage)

SIZE: Medium **HEALTH:** 9

TN EQUIVALENT: 10

UNIQUE SPECIAL ABILITIES

Ferocity: A mewlip gets +3 to all Armed Combat, Unarmed Combat, and Willpower tests against prey it has stalked.

Horrid Bite: If a mewlip holds a victim in a grab, as a full-round action it can start to devour the victim alive! The bite hits automatically and inflicts 2d6 damage plus Strength bonus. Its foul bite also causes disease unless the victim succeeds on a Stamina test at TN 15. If the test is failed, for the next 1d6+3 days there is a +5 TN penalty on all Healing test made to help the victim and he suffers from the effects of the Slow Recovery flaw (the effect is doubled if he already possesses that flaw).

Natural Weapon – Claws: The dagger-like nails of a mewlip's claws, inflicting 1d6+2 damage, plus its Strength bonus.

Undead Stamina: Ghosts need never eat or drink, take no damage from physical attacks, heal all injuries at five times the normal rate, have no Weariness levels and need not make Stamina tests to resist weariness, and are not affected by critical hits (from superior or higher successes, although the Narrator may apply additional affects), stun attacks, poison or disease.

DESCRIPTION

From the Elder Days to the late Third Age, undead abominations beyond reckoning were unleashed by Morgoth and Sauron, by whose dark power wicked souls were somehow bound to Middle-earth even after death. Some of these corrupt spirits polluted corpses of the fallen and became the walking dead. Such is the fate of the mewlip, a cannibalistic ghoul that feeds upon the flesh and blood of the living. Their bodies are desiccated and stained by death, though their nails and teeth are long and sharp. Little of the intellect possessed in life remains in them, but they are cunning creatures capable of stalking and ambushing unwary victims.

HABITAT

Mewlips are found near burial grounds, forsaken battlefields, fetid swamps, and other foul, accursed places. They lurk in the shadows of the sites they haunt, awaiting hapless living victims.

SCENE 5: THE SAD ELF

If the PC's ignore the first floor, or explore it and defeat the mewlips within, they will find that it was empty of any clue or trace of what they seek. Nor will they find access to any other chamber or floor of the tower.

By climbing the external stairwell, the PC's will come at last to what they sought – or at least they think so. Upon attaining the second level, the first thing the PC's will hear is music playing softly and pleasantly. The second floor chamber within the tower will appear as it did in days long ago and can be recognized as a council chamber. Sitting on a central sofa is an elegant looking Noldorin elf, his long black hair pulled back with a thin band of silver. Standing in the room not far from Maglor is a man. The prince refers to the man as Malkemen, one of his elven captains.

When the PC's enter the chamber, the Noldor will hail them and welcome them to the council at last. He will commence with battle plans for an attack on Morgoth in unison with his brother Maedhros. Again the effects of Maglor will begin to challenge the PC's perception and try to draw them in to the minstrel's fantasy. This will work like the Forgetfulness above except instead of completely forgetting themselves, the PC's will begin to take on the persona of elves that Maglor once knew.

If the PC's stave off the ill effects of the chamber, Maglor will suddenly take offense to their presence and begin addressing one of the characters as Uldor the Accursed[1]. The Sad Elf will draw a weapon and begin to threaten the PC, ordering him to also draw a weapon and defend himself. Maglor will say that he will not slay him unarmed, but death is the only judgment for the traitor.

As the PC's will see, Maglor has become mad himself and lives in the fantasies that his powers create. The Narrator must understand that the Noldorin prince truly means no harm, but is unaware of the troubles he is creating. The PC's have a choice – slay Maglor and end the ripple effects of his madness or try and convince the elf of what he is doing and get him to stop. Slaying Maglor is the easiest decision though it may be the hardest to achieve, due to his prowess. Attempting to bring Maglor back to reality will be the most difficult due to the years of isolation and despair welling within the prince exacerbated by the potential loss of their minds in the Forgetfulness of the chamber.

Attacking Maglor

If the PC's attack Maglor or he attacks them, accusing one of them as being Uldor, Malkemen will join in the attack to subdue them. Maglor will only seek the death of the one he names Uldor and the others he will banish from his realm.

Persuading Maglor

The tests required to achieve bringing Maglor back to his senses include Debate, Persuade and Willpower tests. The Narrator may allow affinity bonuses from other skills, or Lore tests to be made to aid in the creation of convincing arguments. The PC's just need to bring Maglor back enough for him to realize what he is doing. If achieved, the Noldorin prince will repent his doings and attempt to correct them – including the restoration of Dervorin's lost mind.

The mechanics to bring Maglor back are as follows:

1. A Debate or Persuade test is made and then opposed by Maglor with the appropriate skill or reaction
2. Each test is for a duration of 15 minutes (reduced by DOS). The Narrator should monitor this because each hour spent within the chamber requires the Willpower test to save against the Forgetfulness effect. If the PC's fall into Maglor's insanity, they will take on the complete persona of an elf long gone.
3. If Maglor opposes the Debate or Persuasion, there is no change in his status.
4. If the PC's overcome Maglor's Willpower, they will begin to crack through his fantasies and reduce his insanity.
5. Maglor has a total Insanity score of 50. Each successful test reduces the insanity by the difference of the Debate/Persuade test score and Maglor's opposed Wisdom/Willpower score (*i.e. The PC's roll a Debate and score a 14; Maglor's opposed roll results in a 12 and thus his insanity is reduced to 48*).
6. Once the insanity is reduced to zero, Maglor will become aware of what he is doing and cease all of his illusions.

With the illusions removed, the chamber will show itself as dilapidated and the prince in his fineries will be revealed as a sad looking elf. Maglor will see to the undoing of what he has caused and then will disappear into the mysterious bank of fog that seems to generate in the area.

Note to the Narrator – it is completely at your discretion as to whether the PC's truly met Maglor or not. The Sad Elf may have been one of Maglor's Noldorin followers who himself has fallen victim to the minstrel's lament. This can leave for a cliffhanger type ending that you can carry forward to your future stories.

"The Sad Elf disappears into the mist… did you just free the Eldar from his pain, if but for a moment? Or were your eyes blinded in the end by the power of the master singer?"

You can play on one thing, though you will not want to bring it to the attention of the PC's… the true Maglor's hands are scarred from the burning effects of the Silmaril. Scarring is a rarity for Elven kin and so this would be a dead giveaway for the characters to know they met the true Maglor.

The conclusion of the Minstrel's Lament is left in the Narrator's hands but the rewards for success are as follows:

200 XP per PC	For successful completion of each scene
Hoard 2	Level of ransom given for bringing Dervorin home to be distributed
2 Renown	Awarded to each PC

[1] Uldor the Accursed was the son of Ulfang who betrayed the sons of Feanor in the Nirnaeth Arnoediad; Uldor was slain by Maglor.

Maglor – Noldorin Prince

RACE: Elf, Noldor **GENDER:** Male

RACIAL ABILITIES: Noldorin Lore, Inner Light, The Art, Beast-skill, Comfort, Elven Form, Elven-sense, Elven-sleep, Farsightedness, Ghost Scorn, Lightfootedness, Swift Healing

ATTRIBUTES: Bearing 11 (+2)*, Nimbleness 11 (+2)*, Perception 10 (+2), Strength 8 (+1), Vitality 7 (+0), Wits 9 (+1)

REACTIONS: Stam +7, Swift +8, Will +9, Wis +9*

DEFENCE: 12

ORDERS: *Minstrel*, *Noble*, Magician, Warrior, Captain

ORDER ABILITIES: Air of Command, Courtier, Deference, Domain, Enchantment, Fires of Devotion, Gladden, Inspiring Performance, Leadership, Natural Talent, Spellcasting (5), Swift Strike (2), Tactics (1), Voice of Power, Woven Words

ADVANCEMENTS: 89

SKILLS: Acrobatics (Balance, Tumble) +7, Appraise +5, Armed Combat: Blades (Longsword, Shortsword, Dagger) +12, Armed Combat: Polearms (Spears) +8, Climb +8, Craft (Ink) +6, Craft (Instrument) +7, Craft (Parchment) +6, Debate (Negotiate, Parley) +9, Games (Riddles) +5, Healing (Treat sickness, Treat wounds) +9, Inquire +9, Inspire +12, Intimidate (Power) +12, Jump +5, Language: Elf (Quenya) +12, Language: Elf (Sindarin) +10, Language: Men (Westron) +9, Legerdemain +6, Lore/Realm: Beleriand (Ossiriand) +10, Lore/History: Elves (Fëanor's line) +11, Lore/Race: Elves (Noldor) +11, Lore/Other: Music (Notes) +11, Mimicry (Voices) +6, Observe (Hear, Smell, Spot, Taste, Touch) +7, Perform: Play Instrument (Lute, Lyre) +12, Perform: Sing +12, Persuade +7, Ranged Combat: Bows (Shortbow) +9, Ride (Horse) +9, Run +6, Siegecraft (Unit leadership) +4, Stealth (Hide, Sneak, Surveil) +6, Survival (Fields) +5, Track (Orcs) +5, Weather-sense +2

SPELLS: *Animal Messenger, Bane-spell, Beast Speech, Beast Summoning, Blinding Flash, Create Light, Display of Power, Evoke Awe, Flame of Anor, Fog-raising, Guarding-spell, Kindle Fire, Lightning, Spellbinding, Veil, Voice of Command, Watershaping, Wizard's Hand, Wizard's Fist*

SPECIAL ABILITIES: *Sense Power*

EDGES: Accurate, Command (3), Craftmaster, Dodge, Eloquent, Fair, Faithful, Favour of Fortune, Gift of Tongues, Keen-eyed, Night-eyed, Quick Draw, Rank (3), Swift Recovery, Tireless, Valiant, Wise

FLAWS: Duty (to Fëanor), Oath (to retrieve the Silmarils)

SIZE: Medium (6 Wound Levels, 1 Healthy)

HEALTH: 8 **COURAGE:** 3 **RENOWN:** 38

Malkemen

RACE: Middle-man, Eriadorian **GENDER:** Male

RACIAL ABILITIES: Skilled, Adaptable, Dominion of Man

ATTRIBUTES: Bearing 9 (+1)*, Nimbleness 10 (+2), Perception 9 (+1)*, Strength 8 (+1), Vitality 8 (+1), Wits 9 (+1)

REACTIONS: Stam +3*, Swift +2, Will +1, Wis +1

DEFENCE: 12

ORDERS: Warrior

ORDER ABILITIES: Evasion, Swift Strike

ADVANCEMENTS: 7

SKILLS: Acrobatics +3, Armed Combat: Blades (Longsword) +11, Climb +3, Intimidate (Power) +5, Jump +5, Language (Westron) +6, Language (Sindarin) +5, Lore/Realm: Eriador +6, Lore/Realm: Lindon +5, Lore/Other (Weather Patterns)+3, Lore/Race: Men (Eriadorian) +3, Observe +4, Ranged Combat: Bows (Shortbows) +9, Siegecraft +7, Ride +3, Run +2

EDGES: Dodge **FLAWS:** None

SIZE: Medium (6 Wound Levels, 1 Healthy)

HEALTH: 8 **COURAGE:** 3

A Field Guide to the Creatures of Middle-earth

Equines, Part 2

by David "Issachar" D.

In this second part of a three-part series on equines, we'll look at the history and ecology of horses and their kin, as well as providing information on their domestication.

History

The stallion **Nahar**, first and greatest of equines, served the Vala Oromë as his steed. His coat was snow-white in the daylight, but under light of moon and stars it shone with a silvery gleam. In the years before the awakening of the Children of Iluvatar, Oromë and Nahar traveled far and wide throughout Middle-earth, hunting the foul creatures of darkness that Morgoth loosed upon the land. It was Oromë first among the Valar who discovered the Elves in the place of their awakening at Cuiviénen, and named them the Eldar, and later brought to them the summons of Manwë that they should come and dwell at Valinor.

From Nahar were descended the great horses of old, including the noble Elven-steeds, and the **Mearas**, from whom horses of lower stock came later in their turn. The Mearas enter late into the histories of Men, though their wild and proud race was long known to the North-men. One of these wild horses was captured as a foal by Léod, one of the Éothéod, the Men who lived in the north reaches of the Anduin Vales in the Third Age. The foal grew into a tall, proud white stallion, who would not be tamed by the hand of Men. When Léod tried to mount the horse, it threw him from its back and he died, mortally wounded by the fall.

The horse escaped, but Eorl, the son of Léod, hunted it tirelessly. Finding it at last, Eorl demanded the horse's service as a weregild for the death of his father. At this time the Valar gave grace to the horse so that it was able to understand the speech of Men, and it heeded Eorl and agreed to his demand. Eorl named the horse **Felaróf**, which means "very valiant" or "very strong".

In later years, Eorl and Felaróf led a host of warriors to the aid of Gondor and won the victory, for which the Steward Cirion gave to Eorl the wide grasslands of Calenardhon, which came to be known as Rohan. Felaróf roamed free in Rohan, and from him came a line of Mearas of exceptional stature, who could be ridden by no Man save the Lords of the Mark, the descendants of Eorl. The most famous of these Mearas was **Shadowfax**, a descendant of Felaróf who at need bore the wizard Gandalf in his errands during the Great Years at the end of the Third Age.

Habitat

Equines thrive in grasslands and shrub-lands where tough, fibrous grasses and other plants are available for food. They can survive in a range of climates, from the arid desert-lands of Harad, to the temperate plains of Rohan, to the cold northern Anduin Vales.

Equines do well in wide open spaces such as prairies and steppes, where their height and keen eyesight help them detect potential threats from afar, and their strong legs can propel them swiftly out of danger. They seek shelter beneath trees and overhangs to avoid precipitation and the sun's sweltering heat.

Feeding Habits

Horses forage for grasses throughout the day, typically consuming about twenty pounds of food and 10 gallons of water daily. Their teeth grow continually throughout life and are kept worn down by grazing. A horse's incisors are adapted to biting off stems and blades of grass, while its molars are well-developed for grinding.

A horse's stomach is comparatively small for an animal of its size, but its intestinal tract is long, allowing it to process a steady flow of nutrients. Because a horse cannot vomit, digestive problems or the ingestion of poisonous substances frequently lead to death.

Life Cycle

Horses mate in middle or late Spring; during this season a mare goes into heat approximately every three weeks, and signals her readiness to mate by urinating and raising her tail in the presence of an available stallion.

A pregnancy lasts for about eleven months. The majority of the foal's fetal growth occurs in the last three months, during which time it doubles in size. A pregnant mare can be ridden and can perform moderate amounts of work, and consumes more food than usual in order to nourish the developing fetus.

When a mare is ready to **give birth**, she seeks a safe, sheltered place in which to bear her offspring. Mares usually foal at night or early in the morning, and prefer to be alone during the delivery. The foal is born front legs first, and swiftly: about twenty minutes from the time its feet first appear to its full exit from the womb.

A male foal is called a "colt", while a female foal is a "filly"; these terms apply to animals not yet of breeding age – usually under three or four years of age.

Within the first hour of its life, **a newborn foal** can stand and nurse from its mother. Its legs are already almost as long as those of an adult horse, and in only a few hours it can travel with the rest of the herd. The foal adds grass to its diet after about four weeks, but continues to nurse for between 6 and 12 months.

As a foal grows older, it gradually sheds out its juvenile coat and its adult coat grows in. The new coat is often, though not always, darker in color. Most black horses, for instance, are born with grey or dun juvenile coats.

A horse that does not fall prey to injury, disease or predators will **typically live for about 25 to 30 years**, and in rare cases as long as 40 years. The Mearas are longer-lived: they commonly survive to the age of 50 or even 60.

Society

Equines are herd animals with strong social instincts. They can form bonds of companionship not only with their own species but with others as well, which facilitates their domestication. A domesticated horse regards its handlers as the dominant members of its "herd".

In the wild, a **herd** of horses comprises several small bands that share a common territory. Each of these bands typically includes between four and a dozen animals. The band is led by a dominant mare and may contain other mares, foals, and juvenile horses of both sexes. A herd also includes a single stallion and occasionally a few other lower-ranking rmales.

A hierarchy of rank helps impose order on the herd, with higher-ranking horses responsible for leading the group and controlling or punishing aggressive behavior among its members. At the top of the hierarchy is the lead mare, a mature horse who determines when the group will travel and what route they will take.

The herd stallion patrols the edges of the herd, defending it against predators and other male horses who challenge the stallion for dominance. Younger and stronger horses frequently challenge this stallion in order to take his place in the herd.

Equines communicate with one another not only through neighing but through behaviors like mutual grooming or nuzzling, and especially through body language. The position of the head and ears, stomping the feet, and swishing the tail are all gestures used to communicate.

Behavior

Although equines are prey animals with an instinct to flee from danger, they are also innately **curious** and might approach a creature, such as a Man, that appears to be non-threatening.

Good memory and a tendency to follow habits make equines well suited for training by the Free Peoples. Some instinctive behaviors must be overcome through training, however, such as the instinct to run away when frightened, to avoid entering enclosed spaces, or to buck off a creature on its back.

When young, equines engage in play with each other than includes light biting and "shadow boxing" (rearing and striking with the forelegs). This behavior must be trained out of the animals, as they could inadvertently injure their handlers.

Equines can **sleep** either standing up or lying down, although they can only doze while standing and must lie down to achieve deep sleep. They do not sleep in a single long cycle, but in short periods of about 15 minutes each. These periods add up to about two and a half hours of sleep per day. While some horses in a herd lie down to sleep, others remain standing to watch for predators.

Gaits

Horses have four natural gaits: the walk, the trot, the canter and the gallop. In addition to these, trained horses are sometimes taught to perform other gaits.

The **walk** is a gait in a regular 1-2-3-4 beat during which the horse lifts only one leg at a time from the ground. The animal's head and neck bob slightly up and down, and its body rocks gently from side to side. Walking speed averages 4 mph.

The **trot** averages about 8 mph and is a two-beat gait, in which the horse moves its legs in unison in diagonal pairs. This produces a slight bounce, which can jolt a rider who has not learned to absorb the shock of the gait or to rise up and down in rhythm with the horse. Although horses can only canter or gallop for short periods of time, they can trot for hours, making the trot their standard traveling and working gait.

Faster than a trot, the **canter** is a three-beat gait that sounds like three drum beats in rapid succession followed by a brief pause before the three beats are repeated again. The horse propels itself forward with one hind leg, then catches itself simultaneously on the other hind leg and the opposite foreleg, then catches itself again with the other foreleg.

The **gallop** is the fastest gait, a four-beat gait in which the hooves strike the ground in rapid succession before a brief pause in which the horse gathers its legs beneath itself to begin the next stride. Average galloping speed for a horse is from 25 to 30 mph; a Mearas is faster, thanks to its greater height. A horse typically does not run for more than a mile or two at galloping speed.

Domesticated Equines

Horses, ponies, and mules are domesticated in many cultures among the Free Peoples, notably by the Men of Rohan. Domesticated equines are normally kept in sheltered stables with access to outdoor pens where the animals can exercise. (Elves do not usually follow this practice, however; they allow their horses to roam freely, trusting in their special bond with the animals to ensure that they will obey and come when needed.)

As social animals, equines fare best when kept together with others of their own kind. They require plenty of food and water, regular grooming, exercise, and attentive care of their hooves. Animals that are denied these necessities often develop unwanted behaviors termed "stable vices", which can include wood chewing, wall kicking, biting, and restless behaviors such as pawing the ground or rocking continuously back and forth.

Most domesticated equines are used as work animals or as mounts. Large horses and mules are used to draw ploughs and wagons, while ponies and mules are favored as pack animals. All types of equines are suitable for travel overland, but light horses are favored for errands that require speed, such as hunting, message carrying, and scouting. The practical training of horses for these and other uses will be covered in the next article!

Character Portraits

by David "Issachar" D.

Just for fun, I thought I'd offer a few character portraits for your use that I sketched this month. I don't know how many people even like to use portraits for their RPG characters – and if you do, there are certainly much better ones than these that you can find on the Internet. If you like 'em, great, and if not, well, no harm done. Also, if HoF readers like the idea of featuring character portraits, maybe we can do this again somtime, with the work of other guest artists.

Art Credits

Cover: “Gandalf Escapes Upon Gwaihir” by Ted Nasmith	p 18, left: “Dead Furnishings” by Warren Mahy
p 1 (background): “Fellowship at Caradhras” by unknown	p 18, right: “Map of Maglor’s Sanctuary” by Doug Joos
p 1 (top corner): “Hurin” by Alan Lee	p 20, “Broken Tower” by unknown
p 2: “The Fellowship at the House of Elrond” by New Line Cinema	p 21, “Ghoul” by Sam Wood
p 4: “Wolf illustration” by unknown	p 23, “Maglor” by unknown
p 5: “The Fellowship attacked by wolves” by Igor Kordej	p 24, left: “Oromë espies the first Elves” by Anke-Katrin Eissman
p 8: “Nwalmarog” by David “Issachar” D.	p 24, right: “Tharbad” by Catherine Karina Chmiel
p 9: “Dragon Cave” by Khang Le	p 25, left: “Foal with its mother” by unknown
p 9: “Map of troll lair” by Doug Joos	p 25, right: “Free-roaming mustangs, Utah 2005” by Jaime Jackson
p 13: “Map” by unknown	p 26, top: “Galloping horse” by unknown
p 16: “Map of Forlindon” by ICE	p 26, bottom: “Stylized horse symbol” by unknown
p 17: “The Village of Eastbrook” by Wizards of the Coast	p 27-28: Character portraits by David “Issachar” D.

The Page You Don't Read

Your Greatest Game Moments

Gamers get some of their best ideas from each other, so we'd like you to share your most memorable moments in Lord of the Rings gaming. Send us a short description (500 words or less, please) of a gaming moment that was exceptionally cool, or dramatic, or original and unique. We'll feature one or two in each of the next few issues (probably in the "Wisdom of the Masses" series). Thanks!

What's Out There

This is a list of Web sites along with Decipher's official Web sites. We have found they supply useful *Lord of the Rings* game information.

DECIPHER'S LORD OF THE RINGS RPG HOME http://lotrrpg.fanhq.com DECIPHER'S LOTR RPG BOARD http://forums.fanhq.com/viewforum.php?f=164 THE HALL OF FIRE WEBZINE SITE http://halloffire.org FAN MODULES FOR MIDDLE-EARTH http://groups.yahoo.com/group/fan-modules THE MAD IRISHMAN http://www.mad-irishman.net STARBASE CODA http://www.starbase-coda.com ENCYCLOPEDIA OF ARDA http://www.glyphweb.com/arda/default.htm SCOTT'S RPG CENTRAL http://www.geocities.com/scott_metz/ CHRONICLES OF THE NORTH http://roleplay.avioc.org/ index.htm	THE LAST ALLIANCE http://thelastalliance.com RPG TOOLS FOR DECIPHER'S CODA GAMES http://groups.yahoo.com/group/rpgtools/ THE STEWARD AND THE KING http://www.stewardandking.net THE TOWER HILLS http://homepage.mac.com/jeremybaker/towerhills TREK-RPG.NET http://forum.trek-rpg.net/index.php CODA WEBZINE REPOSITORY http://groups.yahoo.com/group/coda_webzine THE ONE RING.COM http://www.theonering.com/ THE ONE RING.NET http://www.theonering.net/ VALINOR http://sauron.misled.us

Calling All Gamers!

Interested in submitting...

- A mini or side adventure?
- New creatures, or fell beasts?
- New Orders or Elite Orders?
- Racial / Order packages?
- NPC's?
- Weapons / equipment / magical items?
- Fan Art?

If so, write to us for details on submission at: codawebzine@hotmail.com with 'Fan Content' in the subject line. Please include your name and/or pseudonym (handle/online identity) and email address(es) with which one of our editors may contact you.

Please note that if you would like to submit a mini-adventure, Decipher will not consider it for publishing. Please do not directly submit your items to us without prior approval.

Fancy yourself a writer and would like to contribute to the webzine?

If so, write to us at codawebzine@hotmail.com with **'Writer'** in the subject line. One of the editors will get back to you with details about writing for THE HALL OF FIRE.

If you would like to post an advertisement for:

- A local or online RPG that you are hosting
- An RPG convention or tournament
- Or any events pertaining to The Lord of the Rings RPG or Star Trek RPG by Decipher

Write to us at codawebzine@hotmail.com with **'Ad'** in the subject line along with your advertisement. The advertisement must be less than 100 words and any graphic to go with it must be no more than 1' x 1'.